Los Angeles Star

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 29, 1872

Extraordinary Escape from Drowning, at La Ballona.

The water in the Ballona lake has, since the commencement of the rainy season, rose several feet beyond its regular level. Fears were entertained that the lake might raise to such a hight, as to entirely submerge a portion of the lowlands in that vicinity.

Mr. Wm. Tell, proprietor of Tell's Retreat, a cosy little watering place located on the western side of the lake, concluded to drain a portion of it. ***The lake is very near the ocean, and is only seperated from it by a strip of sandy land. It is about ten feet higher than the level of the ocean***. Employing a large number of men, he set them to work cutting a ditch, between the lake and ocean, which was accomplished last Sunday. The water ran through the apperture and emptied into the ocean very steadily.

About half past seven P. M., Mr. Tell unaware of the fact that the canal made to drain off the water, had enlarged fifteen or twenty times larger than he had left it a few hours previously, took a boat and with his wife, went up to see in what condition the cut was in. The night was dark, and before he had time to discover that the drainage way had broken and enlarged, the boat had got into the current which ran with the velocity of a mill race, and they were carried through the now channel in their frail boat out on the ocean amid the roaring surf, where death seemed inevitable. Mr. Tell by great exertion rowed the boat out of the surf to where more placid water could be found, and was almost beyond the reach of danger, when the boat upset. Mr. Tell grasped his wife with one arm and struck out for the shore. After struggling for nearly an hour in the water, he finally swam through the breakers and reached the shore with his wife alive. Both were completely exhausted and rested on the bank sometime before going to their home.

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